

CLAIMS

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. In a computer network having two or more computing devices in communication, a method for audit reporting on the network, the method comprising:

logging, at a host computing device included as part of the computer network and associated with a user, audit information about the user's activities using the device;

aggregating the logged audit information with similar information residing on other host computing devices on the network; and

reporting the aggregated information about the user's activities.

2. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein logging audit information includes registering a universally accessible audit schema that describes what audit information about the user's activities is being logged.

3. The method as recited in Claim 2, wherein the audit schema is an XML schema.

4. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein logging audit information further includes generating a universally accessible audit style that describes how the audit information about the user's activities should be presented during reporting.

5. The method as recited in Claim 4, wherein the audit style is an XML style sheet.

6. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein aggregating the logged audit information includes synchronizing the information with logged audit information residing on other host computing devices on the network.

7. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein aggregating the logged audit information includes querying logged audit information residing on other host computing

devices on the network and merging the results of the query into the host computing device from which the query originated.

8. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the audit information is related to a restriction associated with the user, the restriction including at least one of a restriction on amount of computer usage, time of computer usage, date of computer usage, web sites visited, and applications activated.

9. The method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising generating a notification to a user, including a notification to a user whose activities are being audited, and a notification to an administrator of the network that authorized audit reporting.

10. The method as recited in Claim 9, wherein the notification includes one of a reminder of the availability of logged audit information from which reporting may be performed, an alert that a particular item of logged audit information is available, an indication that audit reporting has commenced, and an indication that audit reporting has ceased.

11. The method as recited in Claim 9, wherein the reminder is generated on a periodic basis.

12. The method as recited in Claim 9, wherein the reminder is generated in real-time in response to logging a particular item of audit information.

13. The method as recited in Claim 9, wherein the reminder is one of an electronic mail communication, an instant message, a pop-up message in a display device in communication with the network, and a message on a wireless communication device.

14. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in Claim 1.

15. A computer system having a processor, a memory and an operating system, the computer system operable to perform the method recited in Claim 1.

16. In a computer network having two or more computing devices in communication, a method for processing parental control audit data available for access on the network, the method comprising:

receiving a request from an application to log audit data on a first computing device, the audit data associated with a unique identifier of a restricted user;

receiving a second request from an application to log audit data on a second computing device, the audit data associated with the same restricted user;

aggregating the logged data on the first computing device with the logged data on the second computing device so that each device contains all of the audit data associated with the restricted user;

obtaining a user request from one of the computing devices to report all audit data stored on the two or more computing devices associated with the same restricted user;

reporting the requested audit data from the aggregated data on the requesting computer device.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein aggregating the logged data includes replicating the logged data on the first computing device onto the second computing device, and replicating the logged data on the second computing device onto the first computing device.

18. The method of Claim 17, wherein reporting the requested audit data from the aggregated data on the requesting computer device includes reporting the replicated data on the requesting computer device.

19. The method of Claim 16, further comprising notifying a user that audit data has been logged by an application.

20. The method of Claim 19, wherein notifying the user includes at least one of notifying the restricted user with whom the audit data is associated and the user that requested the report.

21. The method of Claim 20, wherein the restricted user with whom the audit data is associated is a child.

22. The method of Claim 20, wherein the user that requested the report is a parent.

23. The method of Claim 19, wherein notifying the user is performed periodically to serve as a reminder that logged audit data is available to report.

24. The method of Claim 16, wherein the audit data associated with the restricted user is related to a restriction placed on the restricted user by another user having authorization to place restrictions.

25. The method of Claim 16, wherein receiving the request from the application to log audit data includes a request to log style data associated with the audit data, and further wherein reporting the requested audit data from the aggregated data on the requesting computer device is performed in accordance with the associated logged style data.

26. The method of Claim 16, wherein receiving the request from the application to log audit data includes receiving a request to log audit data to a parental control channel from which the logged audit data is periodically transferred to a data repository on the receiving computing device.

27. The method of Claim 25, wherein the data repository is a table in a Windows File System database.

28. The method of Claim 26, wherein receiving the request from the application to log audit data includes receiving a request to a Windows Shell interface to log the audit data directly into the table in the Windows File System database.

29. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in Claim 16.

30. A computer system having a processor, a memory and an operating system, the computer system operable to perform the method recited in Claim 16.

31. In a computer network having two or more computing devices in communication, a system for parental control audit reporting on the network, the system comprising:

a data repository in each of two or more computing devices in communication;

an application programming interface (API) to log parental control audit data originated by an application to the data repositories;

a parental control audit process to report the logged parental control data, wherein the parental control audit process includes a process to aggregate the logged parental control data in each of the repositories, to receive a request to view the aggregated parental control data, to obtain the aggregated parental control data in response to the request, and to present the aggregated parental control data to the requester.

32. The system of Claim 31, wherein the repository is a table in a Windows File System database, and the API is a Windows Shell interface to the Windows File System.

33. The system of Claim 31, wherein the API comprises a first interface to log the parental control audit data to a parental controls channel, and a second interface to log the parental control audit data from the channel to a Windows File System database.

34. The system of Claim 31, wherein the parental control audit process further includes a process to notify a user that audit data has been logged by an application.

35. The system of Claim 31, wherein the process to notify a user that audit data has been logged by an application is performed periodically to generate a reminder to the user to request an audit report.

36. The system of Claim 31, wherein the API to log parental control audit data is a schema for representing the parental control audit data in a manner that is universally accessible by the application and the parental control audit process.

37. The system of Claim 31, wherein the universally accessible schema for representing the parental control audit data is an XML document.

38. The system of Claim 31, wherein the API to log parental control audit data includes a style guide for presenting the parental control data to an end user in a manner that is universally accessible by the application and the parental control audit process, and further wherein the parental control audit process presents the aggregated parental control data to the requester in accordance with the style guide.

39. The system of Claim 31, wherein the universally accessible style guide for presenting the parental control audit data to an end user is an XSL stylesheet.

40. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the system recited in Claim 31.